UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Conrad

DATE: 3-12-64

FROM : R. H. Jevons

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: 11-22-63 DALLAS, TEXAS

By arrangement through Inspector J. R. Malley, Mr. Howard Willens of the President's Commission telephoned on 3-11-64, to arrange for representatives of the Commission to microscopically view the bullet and cartridge case evidence involved in the assassination of President Kennedy.

In accordance with the above arrangement, Mr. Melvin Eisenberg and Mr. David Belin came to the Laboratory on the afternoon of 3-11-64 to view the evidence. Preliminary to viewing the evidence, it was explained to them that the interpretation of bullet and cartridge case examinations depended upon a detailed and searching analysis and correlation of all microscopic phenomena appearing on the bullet or cartridge case by an expert in the field of firearms identification. Very little could be accomplished by a layman making a casual observation other than see the complexity of the examination. It was apparent that one of the objectives of the visit was to determine the best manner in which to present the firearms identification information to the members of the Commission. After observing several items of evidence under a microscope, both Eisenberg and Belin commented that it was indeed a very complex subject for a layman and stated that very little could be gained for members of the Commission to view the evidence in this manner.

During the course of the discussion, Mr. Eisenberg indicated that it was the Commission's understanding that in addition to the one bullet submitted to the Bureau from the body of Officer J. D. Tippit (shot to death by Oswald), other bullets had been recovered from the body of Officer Tippit. Eisenberg requested that, if possible, the Bureau arrange to obtain any such additional bullets from the local authorities and that such bullets be compared with Oswald's revolver. In this regard, Dallas has advised that immediately subsequent to the shooting, an offer of Laboratory assistance to the local authorities was extended by the Dallas Office in this local murder of Tippit.

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Enclosure 3-13-64

1 - Mr. Belmont

1 - Mr. Rosen

1 - Mr. Sullivan

1 - Mr. Malley

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One bullet, several cartridge cases, and Oswald's revolver were subsequently submitted for such examination. The cartridge cases recovered near the scene of the shooting were identified with Oswald's revolver; however, because of mutilation, the bullet was not susceptible of identification. The Commission now desires that similar examination be made of any other bullets from Tippit's body which may be in the custody of local authorities. Eisenberg was advised that necessary action would be taken to explore the possibility of securing these bullets from local authorities on behalf of the Commission. Eisenberg indicated that this request would be confirmed in writing.

During the further course of the discussion, Mr. Belin advised that inasmuch as it appeared that almost all of the investigation in this matter had been conducted by the FBI, and since the firearms identification was crucial to the case, the Commission felt that there was merit in having the firearms evidence examined by some other organization and was considering making such a request. Under any other circumstances a comment of this kind would have been the basis for an immediate discontinuance of FBI Laboratory cooperati and service; however, Belin was merely advised in this instance that any decisio as to such a course of action, of course, was strictly up to the Commission. We did, however, point out that, as the Commission has previously been advised by letter, the firearms identifications in this case had been performed independe by several of our top firearms examiners and that these examiners had independ arrived at the same conclusions of identification.

At the conclusion of the visit, Mr. Eisenberg advised that the Commiss was also contemplating asking for official testimony of the FBI firearms expert before the Commission, as well as similar testimony from other FBI experts involved in the handwriting, the fabric and the powder residue examinations of the evidence in this case. He indicated that such testimony would probably be requi during the week beginning March 23, 1964, or alternatively beginning March 30,

On the following day, March 12, 1964, during a continuation of the conferences, Mr. Eisenberg advised that the Commission had now definitely decided that they wished to have an independent examination of the firearms evidence and he advised that Mr. Rankin had instructed him to request the FBI t deliver the firearms evidence to Mr. Ronald Simmons, Weapons System Divisio Fort Meade, Maryland, for this purpose on a date to be specified by the Commi in the near future. Eisenberg did not raise the subject of possible outside independent examinations of the other evidence in the case, but if the Commissi follows the same theory that it is necessary for independent examinations to be made, they will undoubtedly extend their request to additional evidence in the future, such as the handwriting and the fabric examinations.

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Mr. Jevons to Mr. Conrad
RE: ASSASINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY
11/22/63, DALLAS, TEXAS

The question of whether an independent re-examination is to be made is one for the Commission to decide, and apparently the Commission has decided that they desire an independent examination, on the theory that they want a finding independent of the FBI. While we are, of course, mindful of the Director's instructions that we are to comply completely with all the Commission requests, it is respectfully suggested that in a situation of this type the Bureau will prefer to have the evidence delivered to the Commission and let the Commission then arrange all details of any such independent re-examination, including delivery to the independent agency. This would then preserve the independent nature of any such re-examinations throughout and would completely eliminate the possibility of any future allegation that the FBI exerted influence on the independent examiner selected by the Commissi

ACTION:

(1) Dallas has been requested by teletype to obtain any additional bullets from Tippitt's body which may be available and forward them to the Bureau for examination on behalf of the Commission.

(2) It is our feeling that it is undesirable for this Bureau to act as the transmission belt in delivering any evidence to outside examiners pursuant to th Commission's request. A proposed letter setting forth these views is attached.

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